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A

LADY'S  
RELIGION.







A

LADY



REGION.



A  
Lady's  
<sup>K</sup>  
RELIGION.  
IN TWO  
LETTERS

To the Honourable  
Lady HOWARD.

THE THIRD EDITION.

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*By a Divine of the* CHURCH of England.

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To which is added,  
A Letter to a LADY on the DEATH  
of her HUSBAND,  
*By the Editor.*

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L O N D O N,  
Printed for W. OWEN at *Homer's* Head  
near *Temple-Bar.*  
MDCCXLVIII.

A  
LADY'S  
RELIGION  
IN TWO  
LETTERS

To the Honorable

LADY HOWARD.



A Letter to Lady on the Death  
of the Honorable  
Lady Howard.

LONDON.  
Printed by W. Oakes, Strand, 1784.  
MCCCLXXXIV.





THE  
EDITOR  
TO THE  
READER.

**T**HE following excellent Treatise of Religion, is become extremely scarce, and it is impossible by any Means to meet with any Number of them; I thought it would be of Advantage therefore to Christianity, and to the Publick, to cause it to be reprinted.

We are told, in the Preface to the last Edition, that it is translated into several modern Languages; and that the following particular critical Observation on it, annex'd to the French Translation, was prefix'd to that Edition, in Hopes (to use the Publisher's Expression) that the impartial Judgment of so able a Critick, may delight

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the Reader and recommend the Book. It is a Letter of Remarks, written, as it is universally believ'd, by the great Mons. Le Clerc, well known in the learned World, for his extraordinary Skill in Criticism, and if we apply what he says of the Divines in Holland, to the Divines and Writings of our own Time and Country, it will make his Observations appear more just and useful.

Indeed I believe — and it is almost the only good Thing to be said for the present Times, — that there is a greater Spirit of Moderation, and Christian Charity in the World, than prevail'd in the Times when this Book was publish'd. But we still find a prodigious Increase of Treatises, Essays, Demonstrations, Remarks, and Controversies, in Religion, which Religion itself has nothing at all to do with; and which tho' they may shew the great Reading, and Learning, yet seldom shew

*shew the Spirit of Christianity in the Writers of them \**

*When I first read the following Letters, it was at the Request of a Lady, whom I knew indeed to have good Sense, and to be a Reader of Books, without confining herself to Plays, and Romances, on the one Hand, or Books of Devotion and Seriousness on the other; tho' in the Affair of Religion, I apprehended that the Nelson's, Wilson's, Law's, and such like, had been most her Taste.*

*When I heard the Title of the Book, A Lady's Religion, &c, I expected to find in it, Formularies of Devotion, Prayers for particular Days, Directions for Closet Exercises, Confessions of a List of Sins, and Receipts for Saintship, but to my great Disappointment, I found, instead of these, a most rational Treatise; telling her Lady-*

\* See the Books of Mr. W—b—n and his Friends



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ship, what in Religion was truly Good, and what accidentally so; what she ought not to be satisfy'd without, and what she might innocently not concern herself with; in a Word, what would carry her to Heaven safely, and what answer'd no other Purpose, than either to furnish Matter of Dispute for wrong-headed quarrellsome Divines, or to distinguish Religious Sects, or to employ the idle Hours of Devotees.

The Author's Notion of the Sacrament, I found to be the same, as in a late famous Treatise of the Bishop of W——r's, and what he says of Preparation for it, almost in the same Words\*; and yet this Book was originally publish'd in the Year 1697, as well as a second Time in 1704. How unjust therefore was the Conjecture, that this was an entire new Notion of

\* A plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. 1735.

that

to the EDITOR.

that Prelates own, and which the World was obliged for, only to his Lordship!

The great Demand which has been made for the following Letters, will justify this Edition; and the Observations contain'd in the Preface of that learned and judicious Foreigner, will make any other Reflections upon the Books unnecessary.

I wish I could say as much for the Letter I have added, as I can for the other two, it was wrote some Years ago, and sent privately to a Lady, to whom I was a Stranger, but whose Grief on the Death of her Husband, was inconsolable to a Degree almost incredible; and it is now publish'd from the same Motive, the Hopes of being useful to others in such Affliction.

F. W.

THE

# P R E F A C E

TO THE

*French* Translation.

I do not not know whether this small Treatise, will meet in the World, with more Criticks, or Admirers; but whatsoever happens, as I have told you already, so I tell you again, that in my Judgment it is an excellent Book; should any one convince me of the contrary, I shall readily renounce the Opinion I have of it. But as I am as yet perswaded, that this small Treatise contains nothing but what is every Way conformable to Reason, and the Doctrine which *Jesus Christ* came to preach upon the Earth; so I am ready to declare as much to any one who shall ask my Opinion herein. I am always  
us'd



us'd to do so in what relates to any important Truth; being of Opinion, that a Man cannot be silent on such an Occasion without betraying his Conscience.

If I am not mistaken, the Design of our Author was to make appear, that the *Christian* Religion ought to be levell'd and accommodated to the Reach of the meanest Capacity; and that by Consequence it ought not to be confounded with those subtle and abstruse Questions with which Divines make so great a Noise, and upon which they have wrangled for so many Ages: This, I say, is the Design which the Author of this Work propos'd to himself; and in which, it seems to me, he has very happily succeeded, in giving us a true and faithful Description of Religion, such as *Jesus Christ* taught Mankind; full of Wisdom, easy to be explain'd, and every Way adapted to the Capacity of the Illiterate

terate, of Women, and of the meanest Sort of People, that is to say, of the greatest Part of Mankind.

Supposing then that Religion is for the Use of the Vulgar and Unlearned, which no one, I believe, will be so bold as to deny, I do not see what can reasonably be objected against the Design of our Author, or his Manner of Performance; the Description he gives us of Religion represents it to be of easy Examination, and extremely clear and plain. Now, is it not requisite that it should have these Qualifications to be within the Reach of the greatest Part of Men? who being necessarily obliged, as our Author observes, to provide for their own and the Necessities of their Families, and to perform the common Duties of Life, cannot apply themselves to the Examination of a Religion, that should be hard to be understood, or requiring a long Examination.

Shall

Shall we object, that our Author has forgot several famous Controversies in Divinity? But if the Controversies make any Part of Religion, we must then retract what we but now supposed, *viz*, that the *Christian* Religion ought to be for the Use of the Simple, and Illiterate, as well as for the Learned. We must then say, that Religion was given to Men only to exercise their Wit, or to improve their Talents in disputing with one another; whereas, if we may believe *St. Paul*, God revealed it to us to teach us to put away our evil Habits, and to live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.*

I see plainly, that to judge of Religion by the Idea which the *Apostle* gives us thereof in that Place, it is admirably calculated for the Use of all those Persons who are incapable of a long Application of Mind, and who have neither Penetration nor Leisure enough to give up themselves to the Study



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Study of curious and subtle Inquiries,  
not easily to be resolved.

But I cannot comprehend how the  
same Judgment can be made of the  
Controversies which have reign'd a-  
mong Divines for so long a Time;  
they are so very abstruse, that even  
among those who make it their Stu-  
dy to explain them to others, there  
are but few who perfectly compre-  
hend what they turn upon. Yet it  
is not sufficient to know well the  
knotty Part of the Question, unless  
we can give the true Solution of it.  
But can any Thing be more difficult,  
than positively and absolutely to de-  
termine a Matter among so great a  
Number of different Opinions? No  
Sooner hath a Divine pass'd his Judg-  
ment upon one of these Controver-  
sies, but he is immediately oppos'd  
by other Divines, who give quite an-  
other Determination: Upon which  
others arise, who make up a third  
Party follow'd by a fourth, which  
being

being contrary to all three, is again attack'd by fresh Combatants. Now if Religion should consist of such Controversies as these, what will become of the poor illiterate Laity, who are not able to understand even the very Words or Terms made use of in these Disputes? Must poor Country People adhere to their Curate's or Minister's Determination blindly, and without comprehending it?

But supposing that we could understand our Divines Determinations (of which Experience shews us the contrary) is That sufficient to give us a Right to approve of them? No certainly; for we must also understand the Reasons of their Adversaries: And then having compared the Strength of their Arguments with that of our Divines, we are to embrace and adhere only to that Opinion which shall appear most agreeable to Reason. People may  
cavil

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cavil as much as they please, but after all, this is a Matter, which, according to the Law of Justice and Equity cannot be dispenc'd with. You, and I, know very well such and such a Minister, who preaches every Day against certain Hereticks, hath never seen so much as the Covers of their Books, nor knows their Titles; Pray tell me, how can we in good Conscience determine ourselves upon what such Divines shall lay to the Charge of their pretended Hereticks? Should we approve of a *Mahometan* who would believe all that a *Faquir*, who had never read the *Gospel*, should deliver in a *Mosque* against the *Christian* Religion? The Case is exactly parallel,

You will, perhaps, reply, That a Preacher of Controversy does not only establish his own Opinion, but at the same Time he confutes that of his Adversaries; and though he has not read their Books, yet he has seen Passages



sages taken from them in the Books of some learned Professor of his own Party. But, Sir, who will assure you, that this Preacher or Professor has given *a true and impartial Account* of the Opinions which they refute? How will you know that they do not disguise or suppress some of the best, and strongest of their Adversary's Arguments? We see daily, that a Story, in which nobody has any Interest, is chang'd and falsify'd as it passes through different Mouths. With how much greater Reason ought we to fear and suspect, that a Man who undertakes to refute another in the Presence of a numerous Assembly, will either willingly or otherwise, weaken, as much as possible, his Adversary's Reasons, the more easily to destroy them, and thereby to secure to himself the Honour of a Triumph? Therefore it would be an Act of great Temerity to condemn those whom the Chiefs

of the French Academy have approved.

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of any Party are pleas'd to stile *He-*  
*reticks*, without reading them.

Besides, tho' our Divines and  
Preachers should have given us a  
faithful Account of their Arguments,  
we cannot condemn them upon such  
a Report, without being guilty of  
the greatest Partiality; for a Judge  
that should condemn a Man upon  
the bare Report of his Adversary,  
without ever hearing what he could  
say in his own Defence, is an unjust  
Judge, tho' in reality his Sentence  
be according to Justice. An *Heathen*  
*Poet* hath long since told us that,

*Qui statuit aliquid, parte inaudita*  
*altera,*  
*Aequum licet statuerit, laud aequus*  
*fuerit.*

If the Heathens have known, by  
the sole Light of Nature, that no  
body ought to be condemned, with-  
out having been heard, how can we  
dispense

*the FRENCH Translation.* XV

dispense with ourselves for not observing that Rule, which *Jesus Christ* himself hath taught us in these express Terms, *Judge not that ye be not judged?*

It may possibly be reply'd by some good Persons, that Precautions are by no means so necessary in the *Church*, as in the *Civil State*, because Divines have such tender Consciences, as not to disguise or weaken the Strength and Sense of their Adversary's Reasons. But, alas! they know little of the World who talk after this Manner. We need but hear the Divines themselves in order to be convinc'd, that it is not safe at all to depend upon their Fidelity.

For without running back into the History of the first Ages, when the Bishops, true Court-Weather-Coeks, turn'd about with every little Wind, to conform themselves to the Pleasure of the Prince; I say,

b 2

with-



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without running back so far, do we not every Day hear the Divines complaining of their Adversary's Unfaithfulness, reproaching one another for being made to speak against their own Minds, for horrible Opinions, for odious and detestable Consequences imputed to them, such as they never once dreamt of? Nor are these Reproaches to be found only among Divines of different Communions; but even they of the same Party, whenever divided about the Explanation of some particular Text or Doctrine, do the same Thing. One may see them in such a Case, falling upon one another with greater Rage and Fury, than if they were writing against the professed Enemies of their Society. We hear of nothing but false Imputations, imperfect Quotations, and malignant Reflections. And if we believe the reciprocal Complaints of each Party, we shall find Reason to conclude, that

*One's*

*One's in the Right, and  
T'other is not Wrong.*

Furthermore, Divines who meet together to examine those scandalous Quarrels of their Brethren, and put an End to the Dispute by a definitive Decree or Sentence; Divines, I say, so assembled, Wrest and Disguise the Sentiments of one of the Parties, and make them speak another Sense than what was really theirs. The late Difference, between Monsieur *Saurin* and Monsieur *Jurieu*, will here present itself to my Memory whether I will or no. I leave it to you to make the Application. One needs only to read the *Prefaces* of these two famous *Antagonists*, to be fully convinc'd, that he would do himself an Injury to place a blind and implicit Dependance on the Truth and Fidelity of Divines, whether apart or in Convocation, and this according to their own Confession.

The

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The Conclusion from what has been said, is this, that Religion does not consist in those subtle and abstruse Questions, about which Divines have been divided in their Opinions, for so many Ages; since the Common People do not understand them, and are in an absolute Incapacity ever to do so; for does not *Jesus Christ* expressly declare, that he came to preach the Gospel to the Poor? from whence it necessarily follows, that his Doctrine ought to be *proportionate* to their Capacities: And such it is in Effect, as any one may see plainly, by reading over the *Gospel*; as the Author of this Book hath in few Words clearly made out.

We may conclude also from hence, that we ought to take care, that we make not ourselves a *Party* with Divines, by *siding* in their passionate *Contests*, since it is not in our Power perfectly to know the *Differences* between



tween them: There being no Danger in a Man's forbearing to give his Judgment upon these Matters, which he does not understand; but we cannot lawfully condemn both the Opinions of a Man, and the Man himself, (for in true Divinity these two go all together) without just and cogent Reasons moving us so to do. This is visibly exposing ourselves to the same Punishments, which we judge to be due to them whom we condemn so rashly; that is, if we *damn* a Man for holding such or such Opinion, which we ourselves, by our own Study and Diligence, could not be thoroughly acquainted with, have we not Reason to fear least we also should incur the same *Damnation*, for passing so rash and hasty a Judgment? The Declaration which JESUS CHRIST hath made us in this Case cannot be more express than it is; *Judge not*, (saith that Divine Preacher) *that you be not judged; for WITH WHAT Judgment*  
*you*

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*you Judge, you shall be judged. And*  
*WITH WHAT Measure you*  
*mete, it shall be meted to you again.*  
Mat. vii. 1, 2.

To be able to pronounce decisively upon the Disputes of Divines, one must plunge himself over-head in reading a great many large Volumes, full of barbarous and unintelligible Terms, and also of intricate and endless Questions. But our Profession does not allow us to play away our Time: Let us not then concern ourselves in judging of such Controversies, but rather leave to the Divines, the *sorry Comfort* of disputing eternally and bitterly against those who contradict them. I am in doubt whether they will save themselves by those Means; but this I am sure of, that we should run the Risk of losing ourselves, if we should second them in their passionate Contests; not knowing why, or for what Cause we do so. It is sufficient

*the FRENCH Translation.* xxi

ent to satisfy ourselves with the Knowledge of God's Will, as it is clearly revealed to us in the Gospel. Let us endeavour all we can to put it in Practice: Let us love one another, and do unto others as we would they should do unto us: Let us live without envying, being contented with that State of Life which God has been pleas'd to call us to; and let us labour in earnest to correct in ourselves what we find amiss, and to make continual Improvements in Virtue; and by this Means, when this Life is ended, to secure to our selves the Possession of an eternal Happiness. This is properly our Business; and it is no small Work if we acquit our selves therein as we ought to do.

Having thus freely given you my Thoughts concerning Divines and their Disputes, I perceive that I have spoken in too general a Manner. We must give every one his Due.



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It is not true that all Divines are equally infatuated with Theological Controversies. There are some who say with St. James, that *Pure Religion and undefiled before God, is to visit the Fatherless and the Widows, and to keep himself unspotted from the World.* Such is the Author of the *Lady's Religion*; for he is a Divine of the Church of England: You know it no otherwise than by the Title, which often times is Deceitful: But I was inform'd so by a learned *English Gentleman*; who writ to me from *London*; and assured me of it as of a known and unquestionable Truth.

Give me leave to add one Word more upon the Occasion of writing this Book. You must know that the Author being consulted by the *Lady Howard*, upon the Manner of preparing oneself for the Holy Communion, took Occasion from thence to draw this excellent Portraicture of

of the *Christian Religion*, to the End that he might shew, what are the Duties which its Profession obliges us to, at all Times; both before, at, and after our preparing for that Holy Ceremony. Do you not admire this Answer? for my Part I am of Opinion, that our Author could not have given a more excellent Proof of his solid Judgement, and the Knowledge he hath of the true Nature and Genius of Religion. The most Part of Men reduce Religion to some particular Acts of Devotion, practis'd at certain set Times; but they are grossly Mistaken: Religion does not consist in certain Formalities, depending on certain Times and Places, but in a constant Habit of Watching over our Conduct, of conquering our Passions, and studying incessantly to grow more and more Virtuous. This is what your Author has happily made good, and wherein he has given us such excellent Directions, which, if seriously apply'd

xxiv. *The PREFACE &c.*

apply'd to and practis'd, will be of great Use and Service in the Reformation of Manners. This, in my Judgement, is one of the best Performances in his Treatise —





( 1 )

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L A D Y's  
R E L I G I O N.

M A D A M,

SINCE God has been pleas'd to incline your Heart to an early and serious Enquiry after Religion, so that you are sincerely desirous to know the Will of God, in order to do it, I heartily wish you had laid your Commands upon one more able to assist you than I am; who, being bred up in an Age of Speculation and Controversy, have addicted myself to the Study of Divinity, more perhaps than to the Practice of Religion; and have been (I pray God forgive me) more desirous to furnish my Head with Notions, than my Heart with good

A. K. Inclinations.

Inclinations. I thought my self, by my Profession, chiefly engag'd in a Study, how to defend the Church, by Law establish'd, against all Dissenters, rather than to promote the common Cause of serious Piety; and whilst by the strange unaccountable Genius of this Age, I have been led aside to mix the Study of Politics with that of Religion, I have been busily assisting the Office of a Minister of State, rather than doing the good Work of a Minister of *Jesus Christ*.

Now altho' it has pleas'd God to make me in some measure sensible of those By-paths, in which I have sometimes walk'd, to the hinderance of that Duty unto which I ought intirely to have devoted myself; yet I am apt to fear lest those Prejudices and undue Prepossessions of Mind may still remain within me, by which I shall be prevented from giving your Ladyship such an Idea of Religion,

*A Lady's Religion.*

3

Religion, as is short, plain, and pure;  
free from superstitious Appendages,  
and separate from every By-interest.

But, without doubt, such as this is  
the true Spirit of the Christian Reli-  
gion; every Line whereof directly  
tends to make us easy within our  
selves, kind and comfortable to one  
another here, and happy with God  
hereafter.

That our holy Religion is a wise  
Institution, will be evident to any  
one who considers that God is its  
Author, whose Wisdom appears in  
all his Works: Thus the Frame of  
visible Nature being agreeably set to-  
gether, and having each Part of it  
suited to useful and proper Ends,  
demonstrates itself to be the Work  
of Divine Wisdom: In like Manner  
the whole Plan of pure Religion,  
having also its Parts suitable to each  
other, and every one of them agree-  
ably set to the same good and great

A 2

Design



4 *A Lady's Religion.*

Design of the Whole, does thereby prove itself to be the Contrivance of an All-wise God.

And hereby the Wisdom of the Christian Religion will particularly appear, because every Part of it tends to promote the universal Good of Mankind; for which Reason, the divine Founder thereof was named *Jesus*, that is, *Saviour*; because his only Design was to save us from the prevailing Power of Sin, and from those Miseries which That evil Power would involve us in.

Thus *Temperance* promotes our Health; *Justice* in our Dealings, prevents us from sustaining the Revenues of the injured, and gains us Trust among Men, with all the Benefits which arise from thence. *Charity*, by promoting the common Good of others, draws back their Love and Affection to our selves; while *Patience* preserves Quiet

*A Lady's Religion.*

5

Quiet within our own Breasts, and *Self-denial*, by restraining our extravagant Appetites, establishes the just Power of Reason over us, thereby fitting us for all Conditions of Life: And thus the Law of *Christ* answers to the Character of Wisdom, by its Agreeableness to the best Design of God in the chiefest Good of Man; and upon this Account *Solomon* character'd the Idea of Religion under the Name of Wisdom.

Besides these moral Duties, there are several Threats of God's Judgments, and Promises of his Favour; contain'd in *Christ's* Institution; the former were wisely design'd to restrain us from Immoralities, which are our greatest Follies; and the latter to engage us in the Practice of Virtue, which is our greatest Wisdom: The Threatnings prepare the Way for the Promises, and qualify us to receive them; inasmuch as they shake off our Affections from ill

Things

A 3

Object

Objects, in order for the Promises to fix them upon good ones. We must needs cease to be Evil, before we can learn to do well.

Now altho' a due Consideration of the Divine Nature, will carry us on to the Belief of a future State, in which he who is in Perfection the best of all Beings, will distinguish the Good from the Bad by ample Rewards and just Punishments; yet because every one's Capacity may not be sufficient to make this wise Reflection, therefore *Jesus Christ* was pleased (as the Gospel phrases it) to *bring Life and Immortality to light*; that is, to give the World full Assurance of a future State, in which the just God will distinguish Men hereafter, in such a Manner as they shall distinguish themselves here; and 'tis the Wisdom of every one to preserve this Belief in his Heart, and bear it always about him, because it is the most awful Monitor

against



against our committing Folly, and yields the strongest Encouragement to Virtue.

From what has been said, your Ladyship sees first, what is meant by *saving a Soul*, viz. to deliver it from vicious Habits and fearful Punishments, the fatal Consequents of such Habits; and by establishing Virtue therein, to recommend it to the Favour of God. And, secondly, that the Gospel of Christ was designed to this very End; and its Tendency hereunto is its Wisdom. And, thirdly, from hence you also perceive, in what Respect Faith in *Jesus Christ*, is said to save us, viz. because this Faith is our receiving the Christian Moral for the Rule of our Lives, and the Threats and Promises contained in the Gospel, for the outward Motives of our Practice according to that Rule.

And from these three Considerations

tions, summ'd up together, you may examine all the various Pretences which differing Churches and Communions make to the Purity of Christian Faith, so as to form a right Judgment of them; for That Communion which manifests itself to have no other Design, than to assist its Members in saving their Souls from the Power of Sin, by the Moral and Motives aforementioned, is certainly the purest Church; and That Faith, which has no other Tendency, is the purest Faith. So that if you form your self upon this Principle, you may pass by all nice Speculations, or profound Mysteries, which have no direct Tendency to improve your Morals, without any Hazard of Salvation.

*Secondly,* As the Christian Institution is wisely practical, so it is plain: Or in other Words, we may say, that as the Wisdom of the Christian Religion appears first by its being

*practical*

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*practical*, so it appears, secondly, by being *plain*. The obscure Answers which were given out from the old Heathen Oracles, are now known to have proceeded from the Indirectness of a designing Priesthood: Who, to maintain their Pretence of foretelling what shall come to pass, sent back all those who came to enquire after future Events, with doubtful and uncertain Answers. And it has been the Observation of wise Men, that when any one affects to be dark and mysterious in his Conversation, either he has some indirect Design in so doing, or else whilst he makes an Ostentation of Wisdom, he does in Reality but discover his Folly.

Now the Wisdom of God cannot be conceived to aim at any other Design in communicating itself to us, than the Information of our Minds in the Nature of Good and Evil, and this in order to direct our Choice; and all Instruction must of Necessity be



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be plain; since it is by Things easy and familiar, such as at first Sight we may apprehend, whereby we can be led on to the Knowledge of Matters more remote and difficult: But obscure and unintelligible Doctrines, can have no Effect upon us beside unprofitable Amusement; and *whatsoever is by the Wisdom of God laid out of our Reach, can be no Part of our Concern.*

Farther, to what End did he give us intellectual Faculties? surely not to amuse, but to improve us, by enabling us thorowly to understand each Part of our holy Religion, which directly tends to that End, *viz.* our moral Improvement; as you will soon perceive, if you reduce the Christian Institution to its general Heads, which are these.

*First,* A Narration of Matters of Fact.

*Secondly,*

*Secondly*, A Declaration of Moral Laws.

*Thirdly*, a Revelation of such Motives which are proper to enforce this Law upon our Minds. And,

*Fourthly*, Serious Exhortations to refresh our Memories with our Duty; and earnestly to recommend it to our Practice.

*First*, Your Ladyship sees, that the Matters of Fact contain'd in the Four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles (*viz.* the Travels and Transactions of Christ and his Disciples) are so plainly related, that you understand the Relation as easily as you read it. And, *Secondly*, All Laws *must* be plain, because they are Directions. Now, obscure Directions are but Delusions; and *Laws* which are dubious and difficult to be understood, are *Traps* and *Snares*. And, *Thirdly*,  
it

it is as necessary that *Motives* should be very intelligible, because their Design is to work strongly upon our Wills, by convincing our Understandings. Add to this, *Fourthly*, That mystical and unintelligible *Exhortations*, are ridiculous; upon which Account, St. *Rom* forbids religious Exercises to be perform'd in an unknown Tongue.

Now as the four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, contain Matters of Facts, Laws, and Motives; so the Epistles, contain Exhortations to Seriousness and Piety, arising from the Laws, Facts, and Motives before-mention'd: and I take these Books to be sufficiently comprehensive of the Institutions and Ordinances of Jesus Christ: which ought indeed to be easily intelligible, because they concern the poor, weak, and unlettered People, as much as the Learned.

Nor



Nor can I see that the Doctrine of Christ, was by Him, or his Apostles, deliver'd first of all into the Hands of the Learned, to be by them convey'd into the Minds of the Ignorant; but, on the contrary, it is manifest, that our Saviour directed both his Discourses and Actions, immediately to the common People, as well as to the Scribes; and, in like Manner, did his Disciples address their Preachings and Writings.

From all this Discourse, concerning the Clearness of Christ's Institution, you may learn, that you may spare yourself the needless Trouble of reading abstruse and mysterious Points of Divinity. Nor need you suffer your self to be amus'd with the pretended deep Speculations of profound Men, when you have the plain Directions of a wise and a good God before you, in following whereof you shall meet with great Reward.

B

*Thirdly,*

*Thirdly*, the Christian Institution is short. True and genuine Religion has always been summ'd up, and gathered together into a narrow Compass, by those who best understood it. Thus *Micah* (vi. 8.) speaking of God, saith, *He hath shewn thee, O Man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee? but to do Justice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* And our Saviour sums up the whole Law, in our Love to God, and our Neighbour: And in another Place, includes the whole Scope of the Law and the Prophets, in this one Rule, *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, even so do unto them*; hereby directing us to make a right Use of that Reason, which God establish'd as his Oracle in our Breasts; to which we may at all Times resort, and from whence we may be resolved, in such Cases as concern our Duty to one another.

For

For as by consulting your own Reason, you know wherein you are justly dealt with, and wherein you receive Wrong; when you are kindly used, and when otherwise; so from the same Principle of Reason, you cannot but know, when you deal justly or wrongfully, and when you do kind or ill Offices to another: This one short comprehensive Rule, taking for its Foundation the Equality of Mankind, in respect of their common Nature, renders Religion itself a Matter *sensible* unto us.

For I can feel the Wound of a sharp slanderous Tongue, as sensibly as that of a Sword; I can feel the Wrongs done to my self and Family; and am as much sensible of the Benefits I enjoy, from the just and kind Dealings of those with whom I am concerned; and hereby, I am in the shortest and plainest Way, admonish'd of my Behaviour to others: And if this one short Rule were reduc'd to Practice, the State of Pa-



radise would be restored, and we should enjoy a Heaven upon Earth.

For hereby, *First*, all Persecutions for Conscience sake, which have occasion'd such violent Disorders, and vast Effusion of Blood, would be at an End; because every one who has any Conscience, would most willingly preserve it free from the Impositions of Men in the Worship of God. To compel Men by Fire and Faggot, to partake even of a delicious Entertainment, is a savage Sort of Hospitality.

*Secondly*, All Factions in any State would be at an End, if every Member thereof were contented, that every one of his Fellow-Members, who was not an Enemy to the Government, might, having equal Pre-  
tence of Merit, enjoy equal Privileges with himself.

*Thirdly*, The Occasions of War, and

and Law-Suits, would be taken away; since nothing but manifest Wrong, can be the just Cause of either.

And, *Fourthly*, There would be no private Quarrels, and Uneasiness among Neighbours; since by this Rule of doing as we would be done unto, all rash Censures, sharp Reflections, and ungrounded Suspensions and Jealousies, which are the Seeds of private Animosities, are taken away. And hereby we may expect a plentiful Store of God's Blessings among us, who will measure out his Kindness to Us, in the same Manner as we measure out ours to One another.

The Reason why Religion should be both a Short and Plain Institution, will appear if you consider the common Circumstances and Conditions of Men in this World. For though your Ladyship and many more, have Leisure enough to read  
and

and digest whole Volumes of useful Knowledge (if there be any such) yet the greatest part of Mankind, being necessarily employ'd in making daily Provisions for themselves and Families, and discharging the common Offices of Life, cannot attend to any religious Institution, which is either difficult or tedious.

It is certain, that the whole Life of Man, is not sufficient for him to read all the Controversies which have been written, upon Pretence of Religion; but it is as certain, That God never lays on us a greater Task, than what he affords us both Abilities and Opportunities to perform; wherefore we may conclude, that since the Duties of Religion are laid in common upon all, the poor Day-Labourer must have Ability and Opportunity, sufficient to instruct himself therein, without hindering the constant Work of his Calling. And in all this the Wisdom and Goodness of God are made known  
by



by adapting our Duties to our Circumstances of Life.

From hence you may see that you may save yourself the Trouble of reading the long and tedious Disputes, which, with such intemperate Zeal, are always in Agitation among the several Parties of Christians. Indeed the true Christian Institution being short, it cannot admit of being spun out into long Controversies : And though I have read many Books of Controversial Divinity, I do not remember, that I have met with any one Controversy, about the matter of *mere* Religion ; as whether I should maintain in my Heart, a high Reverence and Veneration for Almighty God ; Whether I ought to walk before him in Sincerity and Uprightness ; Whether or no I should be thankful to him, for all the Benefits which I have received from him ; Whether I shall submit to his Will with Patience, and endeavour to govern my Passions;

Passions; to bring them to a due Moderation and Temper, by making them subject to the Law of Reason; Whether I should be true to my Promise, just in my Dealings, charitable to the Poor, and sincere in my Devotions; Whether I should be temperate and sober, modest and chaste, and demean myself in an humble, civil, and agreeable Manner towards those with whom I converse; Whether I should be heartily sorry when I come short of my Duty, and should be watchful in the Denial of my irregular Appetites, Passions, and evil Inclinations for the future; In short, it has not (that I know of) been disputed, whether Justice, Benignity, Meekness Charity, Moderation, Patience, and Sobriety, should be received into our Affections; Or whether we should love God, and our Neighbour; *Orthodoxy of Faith* is made the Pretence of Controversy, but the One Thing necessary, is *Orthodoxy of Practice*.

If

I know your Ladyship will not be pleas'd with a Discourse upon the Subject of Religion, unless Devotion have its due Place in it; nor ought it indeed to be left out; because Thankfulness is a necessary *Part* of Religion, and Prayer is the *Preservative* of the Whole. A frequent Repetition of our Thanks for all the Benefits we enjoy, preserves in our Minds the Consideration of God, as the Greatest and Best of Beings; and thereby nourishes Veneration and Gratitude. In like Manner Prayer for Pardon of Sin, and for Preservation of our Persons, is a constant Recognition of the Mercy and Bounty of God. But Prayer against the Power of Sin, is the actual withdrawing of our Inclinations from Evil; and Prayer for any Grace, is an actual Application of our Minds, to attain the particular Virtue for which we pray.

Now although I would not advise



vise you against set Hours and Forms of Devotion, either private or public; yet I would rather recommend, *a sort of habitual and occasional Devotion*, as very proper to preserve the strongest Impressions of Religion upon your Mind.

It may be observ'd, that many who are very punctual in keeping to their exact Times and Forms of Devotion, have fallen short of any visible Improvement in Virtue. The same Pride, Frowardness, Falshood, Covetousness, and Bitterness of Spirit, have appeared in many who have been constant Frequenters of the Public, as well as Closet Forms of Prayer; *as if God had not been in all their Thoughts*; the Reason whereof seems to be, because their formal Petitions supercede their habitual Endeavours. Men are apt to think, that since they spend in every Day, such a Portion of Time in Prayer, they have done all their Part; and so they leave God-Almighty to take care

Care of the Event. And this is indeed all we *can* do, when we make our Petitions to our Benefactors upon Earth, *viz* offer up our Requests to them, either by Word or Writing, and then only expect their Answer.

But 'tis otherwise with Relation to God. Our Petitions to *Him*, must not take off from our constant Endeavours to perform that Work, for which we pray his Enablement. And this occasional Devotion, which I would recommend, is in its own Nature a constant Endeavour after Virtue, as well as a serious Petition for it. For it ariseth from a frequent Observation of our selves, in our particular occurring Circumstances; from which Observation suitable Desires will almost necessarily flow. As if at any Time I find that I have done an ill Thing, immediately upon the Discovery, I beg God's Pardon, and resolve to make recompence

recompence for the Ill I have done; Or, if I have designed any Evil in my Heart, and presently beg Pardon of him who knoweth the Secrets thereof; in so doing I have given Check to its Progress. In like Manner, if I have spoken slanderously, rashly, or injuriously concerning any one, and upon Recollection thereof, I ask Forgiveness of God, and desire that I may not do the like for the future, but on the contrary, that I may govern my Tongue better; in all this, I am labouring to withdraw my Soul from Evil, and to form myself upon a Principle of Virtue.

Every Night, and Morning, are proper Times of Leisure, to call to Mind the Preservation, Support, and Advantages, we have receiv'd the Day, or Night, preceding. And this Recollection being accompanied with Thankfulness to our great Preserver, is the actual Continuance and carrying on of our Gratitude to God.

If



If I perceive Pride, or Passion, to arise in my Heart, so that I am apt to put a great Value upon every Thing I do, and despise others: Or if I find myself eagerly concerned for any little worldly Advantage, or any small Punctilio of Honour; and hereupon I beg of God for an humble Spirit, and a heavenly Mind; I am herein endeavouring to expel the Poison of Sin, by its proper Antidote.

We cannot but feel the Disorder of our Minds, as much as the Diseases of our Bodies. And the Causes of a disorder'd Mind, are much more easily discerned, than the Causes of a bodily Distemper. For either my Mind is troubled for Want, or Losses, or it may be for the Prosperity of others, or want of a Revenge, or because I cannot have my Will in what I designed. Upon these, or such like Occasions, the proper Cure is Devotional, in begging

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God's Pardon for my Discontent; and being desirous that my Will should be submitted to his, who has taught me that I should not return Evil for Evil, but that I should love my Neighbour as my self. This sort of Soliloquy, and occasional mental Address to God, is a sure Way to compose the Disorders of our Thoughts. For the growing Power of any Sin, is most certainly suppress'd, by introducing the opposite Virtue into our Desires.

The same Method may be used, as to Sins of Omission. A serious Person will observe Neglects of common Duties, which respect either God, or Man. He cannot but take Notice, how much he has neglected his Business, or his Health; how little he has considered God as his Owner, Governor, and Benefactor; and how small a Portion of what God has bless'd him with, he has laid out upon the Good of his Fellow-

low-

low-Creatures. And if hereupon, a Man is seriously desirous to become more dutiful to God, more useful to himself, and beneficial to others, he is therein actually bending his Mind to supply his former Omissions.

This casual Devotion, arising from the Observation of ourselves, under the common Circumstances of Life, (although it can have no set Times and Forms prescrib'd to it) will be very effectual to produce, preserve, and increase, a true Sense of Religion within us. And if you are pleased to apply your Thoughts hereunto, as Occasion shall direct you, this Devotion will soon become habitual, customary and easy. And its Returns, which will be frequent and short, will be a continual Restraint from Evil-doing, and an actual Exercise of Virtue.

This Exercise which I have been prescribing, is commonly reserved to



be performed all at once, in an actual Preparation before receiving the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*; which is usually performed, by help of an artificial Catalogue of Sins, methodically collected out of the Ten Commandments; according to which Catalogue, set Forms of Confessions are drawn up, which the Preparant is to take upon Content, and without any sort of Judgment, or Discretion of his own, he confesses himself guilty of all the Sins therein mentioned together, with all their Aggravations, tho' it may be, many of them were of such a heinous Nature, as never enter'd into his Heart to commit. And if these Catalogues, and confessional Forms, are read over once a Quarter of a Year, or, it may be, once a Month, against the usual Sacrament-Day, the Work of Preparation is thought to be well passed over.

Yet I cannot but think it better,  
to

to keep a constant customary Watch over ourselves, and upon the first Discovery of any evil Design or Action, immediately to retract it within our own Hearts, as in the Presence of God ; and by mental Prayer, proper to the Occasion, arm ourselves against committing the like for the future. Hereby you discharge a Duty in its proper Season, which is better than to delay it to a prefixed Distance of Time: For what is most fresh in Memory, will make the most lively Impression upon us, but may in a little Time be forgotten. Besides, we are apt to turn Forms into Formalities ; and a *natural* Discharge of Religious Duties, must be more improving than an *artificial* one.

And by this your Ladyship sees the Reason, why I have written a Discourse of *Religion* in general, in Answer to your Letter, wherein you wrote only concerning the *Lord's Supper*,

*Supper, viz.* because I esteem a serious well-inclin'd Temper of Mind, to be the best Preparation, either for That, or any other of the Ordinances of Jesus Christ, that we may partake of them with Advantage and Delight.

David advises us to delight ourselves in the Lord; *that is*, in all his Ways and Ordinances. And I cannot see, why our Preparation for the Lord's Table, and Participation at it, should be accompanied with greater Anxieties of Mind, than our communicating in any other holy Office; such as public Prayer, or Preaching. We expect the same Blessing of God, in the Improvement of our Virtues, from all of these Ordinances alike. And why with Terror upon our Minds we should use any of those Means, which God has ordained for our Good, I do not understand. A Man indeed ought to perform every religious Office, seriously, and soberly; but



but Fear, by amusing and distracting the Mind, is apt to render the Ordinance unprofitable.

Men ought likewise to be discouraged from coming to Prayer, Preaching, or communicating at the Lord's Table, with a careless, or profane Temper of Mind; because such Unpreparedness, does harden Men's Hearts, and renders the Ordinance unprofitable. Such as this was the Case of the *Corinthians*, who in celebrating the Lord's Supper, were so inconsiderate of what they came to do, that some of them were *drunk* at the Lord's Table, as you read *1. Cor. xi. 21.* and to this their profane Behaviour, those Texts of Scripture do particularly relate, which affright some Men from, and others in, receiving the Sacrament: On this Account 'twas said, by St. Paul, *that they were guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ: and to eat and drink Damnation to themselves, not discerning the*

*the Lord's Body* ver. 27, 29. *that is* by such a prophane and unworthy Communicating, they call down God's *Judgments* upon themselves; for so the Word *Damnation* ought to be understood, because it refers to the *Judgments* specified in the following Verse, where it is said, that, *For this Cause* (*viz.* of drunken Communicating) *many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep,* that is, *die,* v. 30. Now to avoid these *Judgments*, he exhorts them to *examine themselves*, that is, to consider with themselves, what was the Meaning of that Duty which they were to perform at the Lord's Table; which Duty was this, *viz.* to call to Mind the Death of Jesus Christ. And this Commemoration, is by St. Paul stil'd, *Discerning the Lord's Body.*

The visible Signs of our Saviour's Death, which we discern on the Lord's Table, do prepare our Minds to

to contemplate a divine Person, who for his great Charity to the stupid World, suffer'd the highest Injustice, with such an invincible Patience, and Heroic Fortitude, as was superior to the sharpest Malice of his Enemies; thereby setting before us the brightest Example, of an unshaken Resolution to do Good, in spite of all Discouragements.

- You will perceive, Madam, by this Discourse, that the Christian Religion, is a wise, a plain, and a short Institution; the Belief whereof was design'd to save our Souls from the Power and Danger of Sin, by ingrafting virtuous Habits in our Minds. You will likewise perceive, that I hold it necessary to keep a constant Watch over ourselves, to repent as often as we perceive ourselves to transgress, and by occasional mental Devotion, incline our Hearts to observe the Law of Christ; and all this in order to build up a Habit of  
Virtue



Virtue within us. You will also perceive, that the Contemplation of the Death of Christ, with all its Circumstances, tends to the same admirable End.

And if these, or any other Means, shall Work upon you to be generously just, to bear a good Will to all Men, to do what Good you can, and to be unconcern'd for the Events of Things which are not within your Power; you will be easy within yourself, and satisfy'd in your own Conscience; which is the Dawn of Heaven upon Earth, and you may cheerfully communicate, at any Time

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THE  
SECOND  
LETTER.

MADAM,

HAVING lately been in Conversation with a Lady of your Acquaintance, she took Occasion to speak concerning the Letter I wrote to your Ladyship, which was publish'd a few Years since, under the Title of *A Lady's Religion*. She was pleas'd to favour me so far as to say, that the Letter did contain a good Moral Doctrine: But she thought it a blameable Omission in me, to pass over in Silence those many Doctrines of the *Christian Faith*, which she thought of absolute Necessity

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Necessity to our Salvation. To this Objection I reply'd, that my Design in writing the Letter of *Religion* to your Ladyship, was only to recommend the Moral Law of our *Lord Jesus Christ* from its own *intrinsic Worth*; which appears in those many and great Advantages, which the serious Practice thereof would certainly confer upon Mankind. Not intending thereby, to diminish ought from the Doctrine of the *Christian Faith*; which is therefore *worthy of all Acceptation*, because 'tis a Means to enforce the Gospel Moral upon our Practice. Upon which Account it is truly said *to save our Souls*; since it promotes our ready Obedience to the *Evangelical Law* of our *Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. And for this Reason it was that I advis'd your Ladyship, not to perplex your Thoughts with those Doctrines of Faith, which are of a mysterious Nature; for that such Doctrines which we cannot well *understand*,  
cannot



cannot well be apply'd either as *Motives*, or *Means*, to engage us in practical Duties. This Reply had the good Fortune to give the Lady some Satisfaction as to this Point; but presently she objected to me another Omission, which, she thought, was of greater Consequence than the former. For *Solomon* of old, said she, recommended the *Fear of God*, as a *Fundamental* of Religion. Our Saviour *Christ* too, puts us in Mind of *the Worm which never dies*. And *St. Paul*, if I mistake not, makes use of the *Terrors of the Lord*, to *perswade Men* to Righteousness. But you, said she, in your Letter to my worthy Friend, have not only omitted this fundamental Point, but, in some Measure, discourag'd her, as to *La Rel.* that Part of Religion which p. 34. consists in Fear; in saying, That *Fear*, by *amusing and distracting the Mind*, is apt to render God's Ordinance unprofitable.

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All that I reply'd at that Time was, That *Solomon* meant no more than only to say, the *Fear*, or *Dread*, of God, was *introductory* to Religion; *the Fear of God*, said he, *is the Beginning of Wisdom*, Prov. ix. 10. But he did not esteem the Fear of That Sort, as any *Part* of Religion; forasmuch as every Duty, which is acceptable to God, must arise from our *Love* to him; which is the only Spring and Fountain, from whence all truly religious Performances can flow; and which fails not to cast out all Sort of Fear, except that filial and legitimate Kind, which *Itself* naturally produceth. And in this Manner, said I, That great Sage in *Israel*, *Jesus* the Son of *Sirach*, explain'd himself hereupon, in his Book of *Ecclesiasticus*, Chap. xxv. ver. 11, 12. *The Love of the Lord passeth all Things for Illumination.* That is, true Religion gives the best Light and Direction to human Understanding. And then it follows,  
*The*

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*The Fear of the Lord, is the Beginning of his Love.* That is the Fear of God will prepare us for that Love of God, which, by its *Illumination*, will direct and encourage us in the Duty of Religion.

To this Quotation, I added the Reason of the Thing, by appealing to her own Judgement; whether she would not esteem a Service done to her, by her Children, her Relations, or even her Servants, out of a Principle of *Love*, much better than such Services which arise only from *Fear*. Nay, I asked, if a real *Benefit* which was done to her, out of *no good Will*, could be so much as Thank-worthy.

But these Replies gave her no Satisfaction, because the Book *Ecclesiasticus* was *Apocryphal*; and because Comparisons ought not to be alledged for Proofs, but should be used only for Illustration.



Wherefore she desired me to give her better Satisfaction in the Point of *Fear*, as to what Part it sustains in the Affair of *Religion*; Which reasonable Command, laid on me by her, gave Occasion to the following Discourse, which I take the Liberty to address to your Ladyship in this present Letter: It being not grounded upon the Authority of any *Apo-cryphal* Writer, but of St. *John* the *Apostle of Jesus Christ*, whose Words are these; 1 Joh. iv. 18. *There is no Fear in Love; but perfect Love casteth out Fear, because Fear bath Torment; he that feareth, is not made perfect by Love.*

But since *Fear*, as well as *Love* and the all other Passions, is fixed originally in human Nature, it may justly seem somewhat strange to your Ladyship, that any Thing should be suppos'd capable of *casting it out*. For should *Fear*, or any other Passion, be ejected or erased from

from the Soul, human Nature would appear imperfect; forasmuch as every Passion, serves to a proper Use and Design, in the Frame of Man. Thus *Fear* gives a Check to rash Proceedings; and *Hope* gives Courage to attempt any good Design, tho' difficult to be accomplish'd. *Hatred* makes the Soul to start at the Appearance of Evil; whilst *Love* joins it to its truest Interest, and produceth *Joy* in the constant pursuit of what is good. *Sadness* discovers to us the Vanity of insatiable Desires, and unreasonable Expectations; and *Anger* stands like a bold Centinel, with a Sword in Hand, to keep insolent Behaviour at a distance. Surely these Springs of Motion which God has placed in the Soul, for the prosecuting of good Ends, and avoiding Evil, cannot be *cast out*; or if any of them were excluded, some Scar and Imperfection in the human Temper would be left behind.

Indeed, if any of them exceed their proper Bounds, so that they become malignant, or at least burdensome to Nature, we have Reason to reduce them within their just Limits. Or if one of them takes upon him to discharge the Office, which, of right, belongeth to another, (as a Man may hate what he should love, and rejoice when he should weep) it ought to be *cast out* of that unnatural Usurpation, and the proper Affection ought to be restored to its rightful Function; as in the Case alledged by St. *John*, in that Place upon which I ground my Argument. If *Fear* shall take upon itself, to be the *Spring-head* of all our Reverence for Deity, and of our Obedience to the Divine Will, in such a Case, the Soul ought to be rescued from the Bondage of Fear, and be subjected to the rightful Sway of Love; to which Affection it owes its natural Allegiance. For whensoever a Soul

is



is impregnate with sincere Love to God, it will not endure to be engaged in the Performance of its Duty by Fear, but will cast off its Yoke, and abhor its Usurpation. And in this Sense, Madam, I take it, That *Perfect Love casteth out Fear.*

But since it is not in the Power of Love, totally to extinguish the Passion of Fear, but all it pretends to, is only to confine it within its proper Bounds, so that it may not intrude itself into the Sphere of Love; I shall from hence take Occasion to set forth to your Ladyship, (1.) What Fear of God is consistent with the Love of God, and what is cast out thereby. (2.) What Fear of Man is consistent with divine Love, and what is cast out by it. And (3.) What Fear of Hell is consistent therewith, and what is not.

I. As to the first of these Particulars, it is evident, that whosoever  
supposeth

supposeth God to be an *Eternal Spirit, without Body, Parts, or Passions; of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all Things;* (as our Church, in her first Article, describes Him) and hereupon has form'd Himself upon a Principle of high Esteem and humble Affection, as also of Love and Gratitude to his great Owner, Governor, and Benefactor, cannot but be affected with a reverential Awe, and Fear of misbehaving himself in the Presence of God. Such a one will fear the Lord of Heaven and Earth, walking humbly before Him; and through a watchful Denial of himself, he will hold no Confederacy with any known Sin; nor will he dare to do an unjust Action, though never so much to his Advantage. And all this, because he fears to offend Him, whom he loves, and esteems, as the Fountain of all Good.

According to this Notion, good  
Men

Men have been call'd the *Children of God*; with Respect to the dutiful Behaviour of an obedient Child, to an indulgent Father. For by how much such a one is sensible of the tender Affection his Parent bears to him, by how much the more sensible he is, that all his present Enjoyments, and Hopes of future Advantage, are deriv'd from the constant loving Disposition of his Parent, and so much the more will he indulge within himself, a constant Fear of offending. But then this Fear hath *no Torment*, neither is it imposed upon the Child, but is his own free Choice, his Joy and Satisfaction; and always increasing in Proportion, to the Love he bears to his Father.

But on the contrary, *Madam*, Fear which *hath Torment*, such as St. *John* speaketh of, will be *cast out* by a Love to God. For when with Delight we see that the World is constantly supported by the Divine Bounty;



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ty; why should we suffer ourselves to be tormented with anxious Cares and Fears for Food and Raiment? Which two Things in Conjunction, are a sufficient Fund of Contentment, according to an universal Rule of Reason, laid down by *St. Paul*, *Having Food and Raiment let us be therewith content, 1 Tim. vi. 8.*

Inconsistent therefore with the Love of God, is such a Fear as is *selfish*; where the Smart of Punishment for Sin is dreaded more than the Displeasure of God. In the Spirit of this *slavish* Fear, *Pharaoh* made some faint Resolutions, to set an enthralled People at Liberty: But as soon as the Smart of God's Rod was allay'd, he recover'd his former Cruelty, and resolved to perpetuate their Bondage. Thus a Wolf or Lyon, under the immediate Discipline of a severe Keeper, holding the Rod of Correction in his Hand, may suffer a Lamb to lye safely within his Reach; but this

this Abstinence from present Rapine, changes not the Nature of the Beast. The one is not less a Wolf, nor the other less a Lyon, than at other Times.

Besides, *Madam*, there is this great Inconsistency between the Love of God, and such a slavish Fear as has been now describ'd, that he who loveth God, will take Delight and high Satisfaction, in Contemplation of the Divine Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; but he who serveth God, out of a Principle of slavish Fear, which always compells him to act contrary to his Inclination, can take no Delight in the Contemplation of God; but rather wisheth that there were no Knowledge in the Most High to discern, or no Power to punish. In this Respect it is, that *the Fool has said in his Heart, there is no God*: the Fool is a wicked Man; the Language of the *Heart* is Desire. So that the plain Sense of that Saying is, that  
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an ill-inclin'd Man wisheth that there were no God.

But if you will consider *Deity* as it was describ'd by the Philosophers of old, you will find the Divine Nature set forth in the most lively Manner, by *Pythagoras*; as he is cited by *Justin Martyr*, in his Exhortation to the Greeks. Thus: God is surely one, nor is he resident (as some imagine) without the Structure of the Universe; but is entire within himself; surveying all Generations in a compleat Circle. He is the Temperament of all Ages, the Agent of his own Powers and Works; The Principle of all Things individual: The Light of the Heavens, and the Parent of all; The Life and Animation of every Creature; The Motion of all Successions and Alterations. I was saying, that if you should thus consider Deity as the vital Spirit of the Universe, you will find sufficient Engagements to the  
Love



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Love thereof, from every Observation you will make upon Nature. Upon this Consideration of Deity, it may be said, *That the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy-Work.* Ps. xix. 1. And what Sort of Affections, can this *Declaration* of Heaven and Earth raise in the Temper of Man, besides Esteem, Complacency, and Gratitude? Which being put together, make up that Composition of Love, which *casteth out Fear.*

It is this Contemplation of Nature, Madam, it is this close Observation of that Subserviency, which the inferior and smaller Systems of natural Beings, pay to the greater and Superior, which raises an high Esteem for the wonderful Artificer, by whom *all Things live, and move, and have their Beings*; by whom every Office of Sensation is performed; So that we may *taste and see how good the Lord is*; Ps. xxxiv. 8. And

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from thence conclude by sensible Demonstration, that all *Delight* is the Creature of Deity, continually obliging us to a comfortable Participation of Divine Bounty, and thereby to a constant Return of Praise and Thanks.

And if that small Portion of experimental Knowledge, in the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of God, to which in this Life we may attain, can raise us to such a sincere Love of God, as can expel all the Torment of Fear; surely an eternal progressive Knowledge of that inexhaustible Subject, may be esteem'd an eternal Fountain of Delight.

But at present what Countenance can be given to Fear, from the Contemplation of Deity? Can that Divine Wisdom, by which all Things are contrived for our Use, or that divine Power, by which all Things are supported for our constant Satisfaction,

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faction, suffer any one to give Way to superstitious Fears? As if the Deity were austere and rigorous, easily provoked by some small, and, perhaps, unavoidable, Mistakes of Creatures; and as easily appeas'd with some slight Formalities, and external Performances.

This false Idea of Deity, Madam, cannot be gathered up from your Observation of Nature; but must arise from that narrow, and froward Temper, which the weaker Sort of Men too frequently feel within themselves. And altho' the wise Solomon built an House for the Lord, which was *accepted* of God, (as all the *Jewish* Rites were, thro' divine Condescension) yet St. Stephen, speaking of that Temple, makes this Observation thereupon: *Howbeit the most high dwelleth not in Temples, as saith the Prophet; Heaven is my Throne, and Earth is my Footstool; what House will ye build me, saith the*  
E 2 *Lord,*



*Lord, or what is the Place of my Rest? Hath not my Hand made all these Things?* Acts. vii. 48. In like Manner, altho' thro' the same Condescension, God accepted the Sacrifices of Israel, yet the Prophets bare Witness that he did not require, or command those Services. Indeed this appears in the very Beginning of the Levitical Book of Moses where it is thus written: *And the Lord called to Moses out of the Tabernacle of the Congregation, saying, speak unto the Children of Israel, and say unto them, If any Man of you bring an Offering unto the Lord, ye shall bring your Offering of the Cattle evn of the Herd, and of the Flock. If his Offering be a burnt Sacrifice of the Herd, let him offer a Male without Blemish; he shall offer it of his own voluntary Will, at the Door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation, before the Lord, Lev. i. 1. &c.* So that Sacrifices, seem to be as much a human, as a divine Institution. And it may, without

without any Absurdity, be supposed, that *Cain* and *Abel*, or any ancient Inhabitants of the World, might appoint some certain Day to join their Stores together, to the Intent that they and their Families, might *eat and drink to the Glory of God*; as *St. Paul* speaks. 1. Cor. x. 31. that is, whilst they were Partakers at a plentiful Table, they might express their Thanks to God who furnished it out for them. It is possible also, that the original Design of this *Thanksgiving-Festival*, might in after Times be forgotten by Posterity, who might yet retain the Custom of *Sacrificing*, upon a mistaken Supposal, that the solemn Slaughter of their Cattle was a Thing well-pleasing to God; because it was, as to them it seem'd a Religious Observation of their Fore-Fathers. And from hence it might come, that *Sacrifices and Offerings* were once the Catholick Religion of the World. But for an unprejudic'd Person to conceive, that the

the Deity should be pleas'd with the Slaughter of *Hecatombs*, is a Supposition of a strange Nature. And whence could it arise, but from the misleading of *Fear*, which induc'd weak Men to believe, that God being angry with them for their Sins, must have his Anger appeas'd by the Slaughter of Beasts, that he may be prevail'd upon to spare the Lives of Men?

Now to give your Ladyship a general Account, how this Matter stood of old, as far as I can reach into Antiquity; it appears that *Fear* gave to Mankind, one Moiety of their Notion of God. For it was generally believed of old, that *Deity* was made up of *two co-ordinate Powers*; the one for Good, the other for Evil. And it is a long Time past, since Men's Fancies found out Names for the chymical Objects of their Fears. So of old, the *Hebrews* call'd these two co-ordinate

nate



nate Principles, by the Names of *Gad*, and *Meni*. The *Egyptians* call'd them *Osyris*, and *Typhon*. In the *Greek* Inscriptions upon Funeral Urns, are frequently met the Letters  $\Theta$ :  $\chi$ : the initial Letters of  $\Theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$   $\chi\alpha\lambda\omicron\iota\varsigma$ , the unlucky Gods. The *Romans* expressed the same Thing, by *Joves* and *Væjoves*; hard Names, which I am forc'd to trouble your Ladyship with. And the *Astrologers* carry on the same Notion to this Day, under the Style of favourable and malignant Aspects. I cannot tell how long it is, since the *Persians* received this Opinion, under the Names of *Oromasdes*, and *Arimanius*; but it may be computed how long it is since *Manes Manickæus*, a *Persian* by Birth, and a *Christian* by Profession, revived that antient Opinion of the *Persians*, which by the *Christians* of that Age, was called the *Manichæan Heresy*; and was a Belief of two co-ordinate supreme Powers, the one Good, the other Evil.

Evil. This Heresy was first broached in the Reign of *Aurelian* the Emperor; and in the Year of our Lord 273.

Doubtless, it was the prevailing Power of Fear, which armed *Jupiter* with his Thunderbolt, *Mars* with his Spears, and *Apollo* with his Bow. And what can your Ladyship think of those Parents, who forc'd their Children to *pass through the Fire to Molech*, though it were only to scorch their Skins? which is the mildest Interpretation of those Words of *Moses*, whereby that sort of Cruelty was forbidden, *Levit. xviii. 21.* What can your Ladyship think of those Parents, but that they were scared out of their Wits? And what Opinion can you conceive of those Parents, who burnt their Children to *Adramelech*, and *Anamelech*, the Gods of *Sepherbaim*, *2 Kings xvii. 31.* But that they were frightned out of all Sense of Humanity. For, what

what can be discover'd in the Philosophic Notion of *Deity*, which may give Countenance to such enormous superstitious Fears? But on the other Hand, might not *Pythagoras* well be styled a divine Philosopher, who came into *Italy*, in the Reign of *Tarquinius Superbus*, as *Cicero* informs us to give the then barbarous People, such a true Notion of *Deity*, as might dissipate all superstitious Fears, and afford a solid Comfort? For if *Deity* be no other than the vital Spirit of the Universe, and common Parent of Mankind; Reverence, Love, and Gratitude, become due from Man to God: And *Pythagoras* might well ask the Question, why Men invented *Spectres* to frighten themselves withal. As *Ovid* represents him speaking:

*Quid Styga, quid Tenebras, & Nomina  
vana timetis?*

And for the same Reason was it,  
*Madam,*



58 *A Lady's Religion.*

*Madam*, that *Moses* commanded the *Jews*, to bring their Sacrifices to the Door of the *Tabernacle*, viz. that they might not be offer'd to fearful Objects, which the Scripture calls *Devils*. *They shall no more offer their Sacrifice to Devils*, *Lev. xvii. 7*. Upon which Text it may be observ'd, that the original Word, which in our Translation is render'd *Devils*, is by *Latin* Interpreters, set forth by most odious, frightful, and horrid Ideas. Such as *pilosi, villosi, birsuti, birci, Satyri, horridi, horrifici*. And particularly *Bechart*, in his Treatise upon the *Animals* mention'd in the Old Testament, commenting upon this Text of *Moses*, says, That this Word which we translate *Devils*, was given as a Name to the Idols of *Canaan*, *quod horripilationem iis incutiunt quibus apparent*; that is, because their Figures were so terrible, that a Man's Hair would stand an end, at their Appearance. And whoever will  
read

read the Chapter last cited, will find *Moses* anticipating *Pythagoras*, in his Design of dissuading Men from entertaining a frightful Idea of Deity, and commanding, that since Sacrifices were the Worship then in Use, his Countrymen should thereby pay their Homage to that God, whose Character was *Gracious and Merciful*; the great *Deliverer* of that particular People, and one who still reserved a particular Kindness for them. This Character, is in its Nature fitted to raise Veneration, Love, and Hope; but Fear is an unbecoming Treatment of such a Deity.

And yet behold, *Madam*, a greater than *Pythagoras* is here. I mean *St. John*; who in his Epistle which I at first cited, sets forth the Character of God, by the Ideas of *Light* and *Love*, 1 *Job. i. 5.* *God is light, and in Him is no Darkness at all.* And in another Place he gives the  
most

most amiable Character of Deity, saying, that *God is Love*, 1 *Job. iv. 8.*

As to the first of these two Characters of God, that illustrious one of Light; you cannot suppose it to be an Object of *Fear*, but rather of *Comfort* and *Joy*; forasmuch as the Morning Light has been always observed, to dispel those Fears which have been occasion'd by the foregoing Darkness; it is this daily flowing Tide of Brightness, which tinctures the Earth with its Glory, rendering it thereby, both useful and delightful to Mankind. On the contrary, how dreadful was it once for the *Egyptians*, to sit under that thick Mist of palpable Darkness, which blotted out three whole Days? In how melancholly a Manner did they pass away their Time, when *they saw not one another, neither arose any one from his Place, Exod. x. 23.* But how joyful an Hour was that, wherein the Sun arose to dispel the Horror



Horror they had so long laid under, and look! what Light is to the Eye, that same Thing is Knowledge to the Mind. The Instruction of God, is as delightful and refreshing to the Soul, as the rising Sun to a Traveller, who has been beating out his Way all Night. By divine Instruction a Man finds a plain Way through the World, notwithstanding all the By-Paths of Fancy and Persuasion; hereby he sums up the whole of religious Duty, in Reverence for God, Care over ourselves, and Kindness to our Fellow-Creatures: Each Part whereof is delightful and recreative to the Spirit of Man. Reverence for the Deity, is the Priviledge of Man above the Beast, which knows not that he is in the Care and Keeping of God. But it is the Glory of Man, to know and acknowledge his gracious Owner, Governor, and Benefactor.

As to the other two summary  
F Parts

Parts of Divine Instruction, Care over our selves, and Kindness to our Fellow-Creatures, the Performance of those Duties, carries nothing in it of Fear, or Torment, but is pleasant as *Light to the Eye, and Marrow to the Bones*. The first of these two Duties is preservative of Soul and Body, the dismal Effects which unruly Passion, and ungovern'd Appetite too frequently produce. And as it is a horrid Spectacle to behold a Man out of the Use of himself; as to have seen *Saul breathing out Threatnings, and Slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord, making Havock of the Church, entering into every House, haling Men and Women, and committing them to Prison; Acts. viii. 8.* So on the contrary, how pleasing must it have been, to have seen his *Labours of Love?* to have been a Witness of his *Weariness and Painfulness, his often Watchings, his Hunger and Thirst, his Cold and Nakedness*, by Reason of his great Care  
of

*of all the Churches, which came upon him daily, 1 Cor. xi.*

Besides, let any one but consult his own Experience, and see if there be any Thing frightful, or tormenting, in being conscious of his own Good Will and Affection to Mankind; or in being conscious of the merited Love and Esteem which he has gain'd from others thereby. And let a Man examine himself, if there be any Pleasure which the World affords, equal to the Satisfaction he receives from relieving the Necessities of his Fellow-Creatures, according to the Instruction of God.

But on the other hand, where unwarranted Traditions, and vain Imaginations of Men, prevail over the Light of God, the Minds of Men will be perplex'd with dark Suspicions, and tormenting Fears.

F 2 As



As for Instance; if it be not certain that *St. Peter* was at *Rome*, all the Pretences which uphold the *Roman Catholick Communion* fall to the Ground: Then there is no Successor in Power with the Keys of Heaven, nor any infallible Apostolical Commissioner to guide the Flock of Christ. And that *St. Peter* ever was at *Rome*, is no part of divine Instruction. Now since this great, and as they pretend, universal Flock of Christ are uncertain of their Guide, how must their Doubts and Fears multiply upon them, in Relation to the Way they ought to take? What Security can they have, that the Pardons and Indulgencies granted by the *Holy Fathers*, are ratify'd in Heaven? What Security that their Pilgrimages, Penances, Masses, with their Adoration of a God bak'd in an Oven, and such like Inventions of their *Higb Priest*, shall be accepted by the greatest and best of Beings? How shall they be sure that

that they walk not in the Paths of Darkneſs, but that they are the *Children of Light*, drawing towards the *Inheritance of the Saints in Glory*? But when a Man hath a ſincere Reſpect to the Light and Inſtruction of God, he will thereby be made free from all thoſe Uncertainties, Jealouſies, and Fears, which torment the Minds of the Superſtitious.

Now *Madam*, if hereupon you ſhould aſk, how you ſhall know, that the Books of Scripture contain'd in the Old and New Teſtament, are the real true Light and Inſtruction of God; I think you may eaſily ſatisfy yourſelf as to that Matter. For tho' many particular Texts therein contained, cannot be nicely underſtood without ſome Knowledge of ancient Cuſtoms, to which the Expreſſions allude; yet without any ancient or modern Learning, let any one take a

Ep. 3. no. 10. View

View of the whole *Analogy*; and suitable Agreement of the Doctrines contained in both Testaments, and he will find that the Design of all these Writers was to set forth such an admirable Rule of Life, as was fit for God to give, and for Man to receive. And if you will compare this moral Instruction, with the Superstitions of Heathens, or Papists, your Eye cannot discern the Difference, between the Light of Sun, and Moon, more clearly, than your Mind will distinguish, between Religion, and Superstition.

Those Holy Books contain nothing of *Papery* or *Priestcraft*, or of any other Design, but only to direct us to such Ways and Means, as are best fitted to work up human Nature, to the highest Degree of Virtue it is capable of in this Life. And therefore, whosoever shall endeavour to assert any low, self-designing Opinion from Holy Writ,

is



is the greatest Enemy thereunto. Forasmuch as every mean, base, self-  
ish Opinion, or any such Doctrine,  
which is contrary to the common  
Rights, Liberties, or Advantages of  
Mankind, being asserted from thence,  
is a Mill-stone hung upon the Book  
of God, directly tending to sink its  
Authority, and render it suspected  
in the World. Upon this Foot St.  
*Paul* referred himself to the Judg-  
ment of the *Corinthians*, saying: *I*  
*speak unto wise men, judge ye what I*  
*say.* *I. Cor. x. 15.* Answerable  
whereunto I refer it to the Judg-  
ment of your Ladyship, whether a  
sincere Love of the Light and In-  
struction of God, will not dispel those  
dark Fears, which superstitious Fan-  
cies are apt to create.

But St. *John* saith, that *God is*  
*Love.* *I. John iv. 8.* and therefore  
whatsoever proceeds from him, must  
not be frightful, but lovely. Thus  
*Solomon* speaking of Religion, under  
the

the Character of Wisdom, faith, *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.* Prov. iii. 17. And St. Paul exhorting the *Philippians* to virtuous Practice, faith, *Whatsoever Things are lovely, think on those Things.* Phil. iv. 8. Nor was the *Gentile* a Stranger, to this Doctrine. *Ὁ καλὸς ἡ ἀγαθὴ εἶναι* that is, That which is good is lovely, was the Saying of an old *Greek Poet*, *Theog.* How lovely is it to behold the Creation of God, wherein all Things that fall under our Cognizance, discover a wise Design, by which every Event tends to the Interest of the Universe! And the Character by which Mankind doth most resemble Deity, is in the highest Degree *lovely*; I mean, a virtuous Motion of Mind, towards the Good of our Fellow-Creatures. For by how much the Affections of a Man are fixed upon public Benefit, by how much the more any one endeavours to oblige Mankind by so much are his

his Actions rendered *lovely*; especially when this Disposition of Mind is carried on without the Prospect of Retaliation. For this is the Disposition of God towards Man, as *David* saith. *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth those that fear him. Psal. ciii. 13.* The natural Affection of the Father, is fully answer'd by the Benefit which the Child receives, without aiming at any other Advantage. And in this Respect the *Benevolence* of noble Founders, and public Benefactors, as likewise the *Bounty* of great Princes, such whose high Stations set them above Self-Interest, do render their Actions *most lovely*; because they are incapable of any Return, besides that Joy which naturally flows from the Advantages others receive by their Means.

Add to this, Madam, that a sincere Love of Virtue, excludes all strong Self-interested Hopes, as well as  
dismal



dismal Fears. And thus *Moses* when he was come to Years, refus'd to be call'd the Son of *Pharo's* Daughter, choosing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season. *Heb. xi. 24.* *Josephus* relates that Matter thus; *Thermutis*, the Daughter of *Pharaoh*, who had preserved the Life of *Moses* when very young, presented him to her Father when grown up, desiring that he might be appointed to succeed in the Government, she having adopted him for her Son. How lovely was it in *Moses* generously to refuse these Court-Offers of Greatness, in order to attempt the Deliverance of his Brethren! It was not then understood, that an eager Pursuit after Court Preferments, was the Mark of a true Patriot; but the heroic and lovely Disposition of *Moses*, which *St. Paul* sets forth, was a generous Compassion to his Countrymen, whom he was willing to rescue from Slavery

very, with the Hazard of his Life; as appear'd by his vigorous opposing the *Egyptian*, whom he found smiting an *Hebrew*, *Exod. ii. 12.* And likewise by perfecting their Deliverance after he had conducted them into *Canaan*. For supposing the good *Moses*, instead of following the Advice of *Jethro*, and setting up the Judgment Seats of *Israel*, should have been prevail'd upon, to have establish'd an *Egyptian* Ministry in *Canaan*, he would thereby have tarnish'd that lovely Character of a *Deliverer* of his Country, and Lover of his Brethren; which last Character is according to St. *John*, the Character by which one may know, if he be pass'd from Death to Life. *We know that we have passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren; he that loveth not his Brother abideth in Death. 1 John. iii. 14.* that is, in the State and under the Sentence of Death, as our Commentators explain it. Whereas, *he that loveth*

loveth his Brother abideth in the Light, 1 *Joh.* ii. 10. Such a one resembles God, who is the Father of Lights: *Jam.* i, 17.

And should we consider God, with St. *James*, as a common Father of Comforts, who maintains the Order of the Universe, providing suitable Maintenance for all living Creatures, *Who maketh his Sun to shine on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust*; *Mat.* v. 25. as our Saviour saith; can we suppose such a Fatherly Disposition as this is, does any Way tend to strike Terror into our Hearts; and to lay it there as the Foundation of all our Duties? Surely nothing but the willing Affection of a dutiful Son, can be a suitable Return for the constant Love of an indulgent Father. To conclude this Argument, I think I may say, Madam, that although Fear may prevail upon some ill Men to abstain  
from



from Evil, yet it is only the Love of Virtue, which fixes our Inclinations upon good Things. And I hope I may also add, that as a good Man has no need of Fear, to assist him in his pursuit after Virtue; so is it likewise evident, both from natural and revealed Religion, that such a one can have no Cause to be afraid of God.

II. As to the Fear of Men, which was the second Thing I was to consider, it is plain, Madam, That if your Ladyship shall observe Men to act in *Subordination* to God, by how much the Love of God prevails over you, so much the more fearful you will be of giving them Offence. Our Parents, under God, are our immediate Owners, Governors and Benefactors. And the Honour which hereupon is due to them, includes an *awful Respect* towards them; and if the Magistrate be indeed *the Minister of God to us for Good* (as St. Paul

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Paul

74 *A Lady's Religion.*

*Paul* speaks) every Man will be cautious of giving him Offence. In such a Case, *Tribute* is to be given to whom *Tribute* is due, *Fear* to whom *Fear*, and *Honour* to whom *Honour*: 1 *Cor.* xiii. but since good Magistrates are a *Terror* only to evil Doers, a sincere Lover of Virtue, is far from Fear on that Account.

But if your Ladyship shall consider Men, as acting in *Opposition* to God, you may be allowed to use all necessary Precautions, to preserve yourself from their Tyranny. Nor is there any Thing cowardly, mean, or depressive of your Spirit, in this sort of Fear. *Beware of Men* (saith our Saviour to his Disciples) *for they will deliver you up to the Councils, and scourge you in their Synagogues, but if they persecute you in one City fly into another.* *Mat.* x. 17. 23. Nor shall he be afraid of evil Tidings whose Heart is fixed upon God; saith holy David, *Psal.* cxii. 7.

But

But then will a Man find himself surrounded with tormenting Fears, and dreadful Suspicions ; when thro' Want of a sincere Love to his great Owner, Governor, and Benefactor, he hath cast off all sincere and upright walking, as in the Presence of the Invisible All-seeing God ; when he hath cast off that Righteousness, Justice, Honesty, and Faithfulness, as would not fail to engage Mankind in his Support, and also to yield such a Peace of Conscience, as will not suffer him to be disturbed, tho' the Earth should shake, and the Heavens be dissolved. And then may a Nation be afraid of Evil Tidings, when the *Love of God*, (which is chiefly made manifest by Love to our Brethren) *waxeth cold* ; when a feverish Heat of Dissension, arising from a wretched base Self-Interest, casts them into Parties, when public Weal is regarded only, as it serves private Ends ; as the loud Acclamation, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*,

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*phesians*, was encouraged by the Gain, which the Silver-smiths made by the Temple of that Goddess. When public Trusts shall be coveted by some, to please their Vanity and Sensuality; by others, to gratify their sordid Love of Money, and by most to enslave their Brethren; what Wonder, if upon any extraordinary Event, *Men's Hearts shall fail them for Fear, and for looking after those Things which are coming upon the Earth?* Luk. xxi. 26. As our Saviour foretold, concerning the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was brought to pass by their fatal Divisions. How dreadful were the Tydings of *Israel's* Captivity, which were brought to them by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, and were grounded on their Want of Love to their Brethren, whom for private Interest they enslaved, when, according to the Law of the Sabbathical Year, and the Law of the *Jubile*, they ought to have made free

free? The Words of *Jeremiah* upon this Occasion are these; *Thus saith the Lord, ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming Liberty every one to his Brother, and every Man to his Neighbour. Behold! I proclaim a Liberty to you, saith the Lord, to the Sword to the Pestilence, and to the Famine. And I will make you to be removed to all the Kingdoms of the Earth. Jer. xxxvii. 17.* The Effect of this Prophecy is visible at this Day, though the first fulfilling of it was by the Arms of a *Babylonish Tyrant*, who was in that Day the great Patron of Idolatry and Tyranny; himself being no more than a *King of Slaves*.

But yet Madam, a true *Israelite* in whom was no Guile; who loved the Lord, with all his Heart, and his Neighbour as himself, who was neither ambitious, nor covetous, nor over-sollicitous concerning the Ho-

nours, Riches, or Pleasures; which the World affords; who walked watchfully in the Denial of himself, so far as to hold no Confederacy with any known Sin; who, when he has fallen from his Duty, has recover'd himself by true Repentance; who has been true to his Promise, just in his Actions, charitable to the Poor, and well inclin'd to all Men; who could forgive Injuries, laying aside all Thoughts of Revenge; who could be meek, calm, and gentle, when in the Hands of furious and violent Spirits; who was of a tender Disposition, being as ready to prevent Men from falling into Immoralities and Dangers, as he was to compassionate them in Adversity; such a one as could be moderate in Power, and humble in Prosperity; whose Actions discover a Love to his Country, free from the Bias of private Interest, and whose hearty Inclinations were towards the Good  
of



of Mankind ; such a Man as this, was privileg'd from the Fear of evil Tidings, and was commissioned to hope, that *Through the Voice of the Lord, the Assyrian shall be beaten down, who smote with a Rod. Isa. xxx. 31.*

Nay, Madam, it was to chear up the Heart of such an *Israelite* as this, that the Prophet *Isaiah* foretold the Downfall of the *Babylonish* Grand Monarch ; whose Slaves usually stiled him *the King*, as if there were no other King besides him : Saying, *Tophet is ordain'd of old, yea for the King it is prepar'd, he hath made it deep and large : The Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood, and the Breath of the Lord like a Stream of Brimstone, doth kindle it.*

III. As to the Fear of Hell, Madam, I have very little to say ; for if your Ladyship considers Hell as a  
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consummate State of Wickedness, doubtless a virtuous Person is at the greatest Distance from thence. He who, out of a sincere Love to God, is careful to know, and conscientious to do his Will, submitting not only his Words and Actions, but the very Purposes of his Heart thereunto; he, in whom the Love of God hath cast down all Pride, and Haughtiness, both of Heart and Carriage, having reduced his Passions to a due Moderation, and Temper; who, through his Love to God, esteems the World no more than it deserves, and makes use of it only to gratify a generous Disposition of Mind, ready to compassionate and help in Adversity; This Man, is so far from any Fear of Hell, that he has in some Degree, the actual Possession of Heaven upon Earth: And by being conscious of such his Love to God, he is actually Partaker of those Divine Joys, which alone we can suppose

pose to affect the Saints in Glory :  
That is such a Delight, as never sur-  
feits nor cloyes, though never so fre-  
quently renew'd, or ever so long con-  
tinued, and such as leaves no ill Re-  
lish behind it.

But on the other Hand, if a Man  
bears no true Love to the Great and  
Good GOD, but dares commit Sin  
with Presumption ; if he be govern'd  
by unruly Passions, insatiable De-  
sires, or by an ambitious, covetous,  
or malicious Temper ; if he be  
moved by Envy, at the Prosperity of  
some, or by Revenge for small Of-  
fences taken at others ; this Man is  
already sensible of Hell upon Earth.  
And though a thousand Inventions  
may be found out to quiet the evil  
Spirit, which arises from the *Self-  
consciousness* of his own wicked Heart,  
yet nothing can alleviate his *Tor-  
ment*, because nothing can separate  
Conscience from the Soul of  
Man.

'Tis



'Tis true, Madam, that sometimes the Instrumental Parts of Religion are called in aid, to allay the Terrors of a Hell within; and these devotional Performances joined with a strong Fancy, may for a Time have some Effect upon an Enthusiastick Temper; as *David's* Harp had upon *Saul's* Melancholly, so long as the Musick lasted. But yet the dreadful Apprehensions of Guilt will not totally be extinguish'd, till our earnest Endeavours have recovered us to a sincere Love of God.

Having thus endeavoured to shew, what Fear of God, of Man, and of Hell, is consistent with the Love of God; I hope it will appear that I do no Ill, when I offered to shew your Ladyship yet a more excellent Way, *That of Charity, or Love*; and advised you in some Measure, to soften the Power of Fear, in your Religious Practices, and Devotional Performances.

formances. I beg your Ladyship's  
favourable Construction of what I  
have written in this Letter, meaning  
thereby to testify the Respect which  
is due to you, from

*Your Ladyship's*

*Most obliged and*

*Most humble Servant.*



formances: I beg your Ladyship's  
favourable Consideration of what I  
have written in this Letter, meaning  
thereby to rectify the defects which  
is due to you, from

Your Ladyship's

Most obliged and

Most humble servant,

Elizabeth



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A  
**LETTER to a LADY**

**ON THE**  
*Death* of her **HUSBAND.**

*To Mrs. C—*

**MADAM,**

**Y**OU will naturally be much surpris'd, at the first Sight of a Letter, in a strange Hand, without a Name; and perhaps still more as you read it. — But tho' I have not the Honour to be acquainted with you, any otherwise than by Report, yet I know your Loss, and have heard of your Affliction; — heard lately what astonishes and really hurts me.

This being the Case, *Madam*, and

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as it is the great Pleasure of my Life to give Help to the Distressed, to the best of my Abilities, so I could not hear of a Lady, plung'd by Providence, or, rather, by her own unhappy Temper and Disposition, in a Depth of Misery, which, I am sure, Human Nature is hardly equal to, without extending my Hand — if it be possible, — to lead her out of it. Such, and such only, *Madam*, is the Intention of this Letter; and I hope it will lose none of its Weight, in coming without a Name, and from one who has declar'd, that he is no otherwise your Friend, than as a Lover of the Human Kind.

Read it therefore with Attention, *Madam*, and read it without Prejudice: Don't give it the reproachful Character of *Impertinent and assuming*, but look upon it — as in  
H Truth

*the Death of her Husband.* 87

Truth it is — a serious, sincere, and benevolent Attempt, to make a very valuable Life — alas! at present, a very heavy Burden — comfortable to yourself, and agreeable as it has been always to your Friends. — Your Friends I believe, *Madam*, have not exerted themselves on this Occasion, in a Manner I could wish, out of an ill judg'd Tenderness and Affection. Indeed it is impossible, but that your own good Sense and Piety, must have suggested many Reflections of great Use in your present Circumstances; but they may not have suggested *All*: We know that Passion very often takes away the right Use of Reason, and either inverts the Objects it looks at, or gives them a Colour which is not their own. — And tho' there are many Consolations in Books of Philosophy, and Devotion, which you must,  
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of Course, have met with, and which I have not the Vanity to emulate, yet one Person sometimes produces Arguments on a Subject, which are not thought of by another; and every one is not alike affected with the same Way of Reasoning.

This encourages me to believe, *Madam*, that I may perhaps drop some Hints, which you have not yet attended to; and I am willing to flatter myself for your Sake, that, when you have weigh'd them dispassionately — if you can bring yourself to do it — they may help to restore you (to say nothing of your Duty) to Yourself, your Friend, and the World. — I know it is a mighty easy Thing, and not an uncommon one, to say Be chearful and contented; tho' it is in other Words, Be happy. But the Difficulty is to shew the

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the Means, and to put it within our Power; this I am now attempting, and this I conjure you to recollect yourself to attend, with Coolness and Command.

I have never heard you mention'd, *Madam*, under any other Character than that of a prodigious good Woman; and I dare say you justly deserve it. — But when you lay before you the Whole of Things, the Wisdom of your Maker, and the Relation you stand in to him, the hidden Ways and Goodness of his Providence, and the Right which he has to impose a Discipline upon us, in the Way of Probation for a Scene of Things to come, you will find that an *Immoderate Discontent*, let the Loss and the Disappointment be what it will — how much less then when it is only the common  
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Fate of Man! — is in no Sort consistent with a real Sense of Goodness.

The World has been strangely mistaken about Piety; a Belief of God's Existence, and a constant Series of Devotion, in his public and private Worship, tho' so often declar'd in Scripture to have no other Efficacy with Regard to Us, than as Means to assist us in our Duty, yet by a strange Sort of Delusion, have pass'd upon the World for the Fruits of Holiness and Virtue. Men have so long made Use of these Externals in Religion, not under the proper Notion of their being Means, but as the *End Itself* of Piety, that we often see Instances, of those who are very deficient, in that absolute Resignation, that entire Trust and Confidence, which they ought to have in a Being of such consummate Power



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Power and Goodness, who would on no Account omit the Marks of Outward Holiness.

But, *Madam*, I make no Scruple to declare, that Piety, or our Duty to God — call it which you please — *consider'd particularly as such*, is to cast ourselves upon him without any Murmuring or Discontent; to submit to him as the wisest and best of Beings; and absolutely to depend upon his Care and Providence, as the Governor of the World. This is That Temper of Mind which is most particularly suitable to the State we are passing thro', and there can be no Love of such a Being, as God is, without it. We know that we derive every thing which we enjoy in this Life from his essential Goodness; we know that he has a Power to do what he pleases; but we  
likewise

likewise know that he is a Being of the most absolute Benevolence, who delights in doing Good to all his Creatures, without Exception; tho' as he has further Things in View than what appear to Us, his Appointments, on many Occasions, seem unaccountable and severe.

And what, *Madam*, is the Conclusion that is to be drawn from hence, but that we should refer ourselves entirely and implicitly to Him, and place all our Trust and Confidence in his Goodness? — Vain then is all the Pomp of Worship, and the Solemnity of Devotion, unless this is the habitual Frame and Disposition of our Minds, towards the great Eternal Mover.

But to press this Truth in all its Force upon you, *Madam*, address  
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your desponding Heart, under the Weight of your present Sorrows, with such Reflection as these:— I find, by my Experience, that I came into this World without any Design of my own, and under the Direction of a Wise, a Good, and Powerful Being;—his Providence has all along continually supported me;— to his Favour I owe every thing which I ever had, and the Scriptures have assur'd me, that a Hair does not fall from my Head, without him. — But at the same Time I am his Creature, who can claim nothing from him, and my very Being is an Act of his Free Will and Mercy. — Shall I complain then of the Condition or Allotment which he has order'd, and find Fault with his Administration?— No. This is an Excess of Pride and Folly, which  
my



my Heart can ne'er comply with;—  
and what am I, to expect that He  
who ruleth over all the Kingdoms of  
the Earth, should interrupt the gene-  
ral Laws, by which the World is  
govern'd, for my Sake?—I see many  
of my own Species, many of my  
own Sex, every Day involv'd in the  
same Calamities which I now be-  
moan, and attended, alas! with Cir-  
cumstances of far more exquisite Dis-  
tress.—I find it is the common Fate  
of Mortals; and why then should I  
expect to be distinguish'd?—It is  
certain that I was not brought into  
this World, on purpose to lead a Life  
exempt from Pain and Sorrow; it is  
not the Lot of Man;—there was  
another End, 'tis likely, which  
the great Disposer of Events intend-  
ed; He alone sent me forth to inha-  
bit that Part of Earth I tread on, and  
He

He alone knows how long, and under what peculiar Circumstance, I should inhabit it. — Shall I not therefore, bear the Part which is allotted me, with Contentment and Tranquility, rather than displease, by another Conduct, the Author of my Existence? Shall I not submit to the worst Condition of Mortality, with Resignation and a quiet Mind, rather than hazard an Offence to Him, on whom my Happiness must depend for ever? — These are Questions, *Madam*, which, in my Opinion, will have some Influence on a Mind dispos'd to Seriousness and Piety; and having been so full upon this Point, which concerns your Duty towards your Maker, I shall be shorter in what follows: It is doubtless of less Importance, but yet it is proper to be mention'd by me upon  
this

this Occasion, and that you should calmly attend to it.

If it has pleas'd the Almighty Ruler, to put the Happiness of our Nature in a great Measure within our Power—and that, let People think as they will, he plainly has done, — then we must impute the greatest Part of our Miseries, if we *are* miserable, to Ourselves; to our resting in External Objects as our Happiness, instead of using the Mind to Self-Enjoyment. — This, *Madam*, tho' a real Lesson of Philosophy, yet I persuade myself is not so abstracted and philosophical, but that you will easily comprehend it. — Such as it is, I leave it with you, and pass on to observe, that there is something due to Friendship; some Regard to Those, who love you too tenderly, to see you over-whelm'd as you are  
with



Sorrows without being themselves greatly affected. — And this is a Consideration, which I think should work much upon the Disposition of a Lady, so humane and good-natur'd, as you are always said to be. For if your present State of Mind, has had such an Effect upon a mere Stranger as to produce this Letter, and the Commiseration expressed in it, how do you think it must hurt those, who, from an intimate Acquaintance with your many amiable Qualities, have learnt to take a Part in every Thing which You feel.

Let me beseech you, therefore, *Madam*, not to give yourself up to such an Extravagance of Affliction, as must not only make you wretched whilst you live, but must also shorten a Life, that is extremely valu'd

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by your Friends, and which may be useful to those about you. — The World about you, your Relations, your Acquaintance, may have many Demands for the Services which you are able to do them. Reassume, then, your wonted Greatness of Mind; true Piety — as I have already told you — consists in submitting *to*, and not contending *against*, the Will of Heaven; It will be your present Peace, and your future Glory.

With these Sentiments, *Madam*, I shall take my Leave; you will do me the Justice to believe, I hope, that I have meant nothing through the Whole, but your Felicity; and to know who has pursu'd such an uncommon Way to serve you, as it cannot give any Thing that has been  
said

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said a greater Weight, so it cannot  
be of any Moment.—It is One who  
desires to do Good, tho' he has but  
few Abilities, and who with the ut-  
most Sincerity, prays this Attempt  
may succeed. — It is submitted to  
God, and your own Heart, and I am,

*M A D A M,*

*Your Most Obedient*

*Humble Servant,*

*Aug. 1744.*

*F. W.*

*F I N I S.*





